

# SUSTAINABLE U.S. SEAFOOD: A JOURNEY FROM SEA TO MARKET

Go on a journey with NOAA Fisheries Service in this five-part series to learn about the complex process and the people involved in getting safe and sustainable seafood to your dinner plate.

## Is your seafood safe to eat?

We have a vast array of fish, shellfish and fishery products to choose from when deciding what's for dinner. Whether our choice is wild or farmed, local or imported, fresh or frozen, raw or cooked, we want it to be safe to eat. Many state and federal agencies including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S. Department of Commerce (USDC) work together to ensure that the seafood we buy is safe and wholesome.

Did you know NOAA is also involved in keeping seafood safe and ensuring the quality of your seafood products? The NOAA Seafood Inspection Program (SIP), which is a part of USDC, is a voluntary, fee-for-service program that works with the FDA and USDA to provide science-based inspection services to the seafood industry and to ensure safe, high quality seafood.

To find out if your fish has been inspected by NOAA's SIP, check the label (it may say U.S. Grade A or USDC inspected). If the label doesn't tell you, ask your fishmonger if it's from an Approved Establishment. More info at: [seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov/AdPolicy.pdf](http://seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov/AdPolicy.pdf)

## What is safe seafood?

All seafood processors and retailers, both domestic and international, must meet certain food safety requirements as mandated by the FDA. These requirements include eight points of sanitation (see below). To ensure they are meeting or exceeding these regulatory requirements, businesses can voluntarily request help from the SIP to develop, implement and verify a plan that shows they are following the law. Once these businesses pass inspection they are now an *Approved Establishment* but are subject to all normal standard regulatory inspections by the FDA.

## Would your kitchen pass SIP inspection?

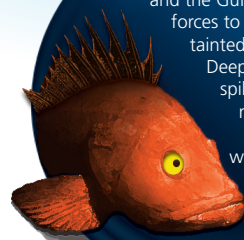
Check out the eight points of sanitation used by SIP inspectors to find out if your kitchen would stand up to an inspection.

1. Water or ice that comes into contact with the seafood or surfaces used to process the seafood is safe.
2. All surfaces the seafood comes into contact with, including utensils, gloves and clothes are in good condition and clean.
3. No possibility of cross contamination from insanitary objects to food from multiple sources including raw seafood to cooked seafood.
4. Maintain in good working condition hand washing, hand sanitizing and toilet facilities.
5. Protection of seafood, food packaging and contact surfaces from being ruined by chemical, physical or biological contaminants.
6. Proper labeling, storage and use of toxic compounds.
7. Manage employee health conditions that could result in microbiological contamination of seafood, food packaging materials and contact surfaces.
8. Proper pest control.

The NOAA SIP inspects all seafood in school lunch programs across the U.S.



Use your senses! Learn how NOAA, the FDA and the Gulf states joined forces to prevent seafood tainted with oil from the Deep Water Horizon oil spill from reaching the marketplace. Watch this video: <http://www.youtube.com/noaa#p/a/u/1/pantl8WYynE>



## What happens when inspectors find problems?

The most common reason for rejection is finding that the label overstates the amount of seafood in a package. For example, the packer may have failed to subtract the weight of ice or water from the declared weight of fish. SIP inspectors also routinely reject seafood that fails to meet specific quality requirements. Unsafe fishery products are referred to the appropriate regulatory agency for action. This may involve recall, reconditioning or destruction of unsafe seafood.

Your seafood may be waterlogged! Did you know that some seafood processors add a chemical called Sodium Tripolyphosphate to add water weight to seafood or make it look fresh? SIP inspections ensure that you are getting what you pay for.



## How is seafood inspected?

Whether for import, export or sold domestically, SIP consumer safety inspectors and officers travel to fishing vessels, processors and cold storage facilities around the world to evaluate seafood processors and retailers who have requested an inspection or who are under investigation. There are two strategies that inspectors use to evaluate and certify seafood: random sampling of finished products (often preferred by seafood retailers), and inspection of Approved Establishments. These are used to certify fishery products imported into the U.S. or exported from the U.S. to other countries like China, Europe and Russia. Learn more about the NOAA Seafood Inspection Program at [seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov](http://seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov).



SIP consumer safety officers inspect seafood (Photo: NOAA Fisheries Service)

Seafood is everyone's responsibility. Take time to educate yourself about how to buy, handle and cook seafood. Learn more at [fishwatch.gov](http://fishwatch.gov).

